



The findings emphasise the importance of supporting young Londoners to be active

Jan 14, 2021 13:08 GMT

Sharp decline in children's activity levels across London due to covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19 has caused a sharp decline in the amount of activity and exercise done by children and young people in London, according to [new data](#) released today (14 January) by Sport England.

The findings provide a stark reminder of the importance of prioritising the needs of disadvantaged children in the capital's recovery plans, and the need for collaborative, targeted approaches to help young Londoners return to activity.

The 2019-20 academic year saw just 41.9% of London's children (years 1-11) hit the recommended average of 60 minutes or more of activity every day, down 4.2% compared to the 2018-19 academic year, and below the national average of 44.9%.

The number of children and young people considered less active (completing less than an average of 30 minutes of activity a day) saw a sharp rise; other major city regions, including Manchester and Liverpool, also recorded rises in inactivity levels related to the covid-19 pandemic.

[Sport England](#) found that 34.1% of London's children were less active, an increase of 5.3% on the previous year (2018-19) and above the national average of 31.3%.

Throughout the pandemic, work has been taking place in London to support youth organisations, schools and parents to help keep children and young people active, through campaigns, [funding](#) and the development of [resources](#) for community sport bodies.

Despite these efforts, and in line with wider concerns about the lack of opportunities accessible by many of the capital's most disadvantaged communities, young Londoners have lost out on opportunities to be active, putting many children below the recommended activity levels.

Now, with a third period of national restrictions in place, these findings emphasise the importance of supporting young Londoners, their families and their communities, to ensure the fall in activity levels can be arrested and reversed in the months ahead.

Gary Palmer, Specialist Advisor for Children and Young People, said:

“We knew as soon as schools were closed in the Spring of 2020 that children's activity levels would suffer as a result and the data shows those concerns were accurate.

“What we must do now is to work together as a sector, with policy makers, funders and community leaders, to ensure physical activity and sport is among the highest priorities for our children when it is safe to return to play.

“As with so many aspects of the past year, pre-existing inequalities have been thrown into sharp relief by the pandemic and it’s imperative our next steps ensure every child in London can build a physical activity habit for life.”

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive of Sport England, added:

“The figures clearly demonstrate how important it will be to open facilities and encourage the return to play as soon as it’s safe to do so.☒☒

“Schools play a vital role in keeping young people active – both through physical education and by providing the facilities many clubs and groups rely on – and it’s imperative they’re in a position to facilitate physical activity the moment they can.☒

“The pandemic has impacted us all in some way, but today’s report reminds us that it has not impacted everyone equally. We owe it to the groups most affected to do all we can to get sport and physical activity up and running in all its forms.”

See the full report form Sport England [here](#).

Note: Due to lower response numbers due to covid-19, Sport England have decided not to publish local authority level data in this release.

About London Sport

London Sport is a charity working to ensure more Londoners live happier, healthier lives through access to sport and physical activity. Supported by Sport England and the Mayor of London, we collaborate with those that share our vision, running and supporting projects that help children, young people and the least active adults to embed sport and physical activity into their lives.

For more information on London Sport, visit www.londonsport.org

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